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Taber. Earnest Expostulation with  
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AN

# EARNEST EXPOSTULATION

WITH THOSE

PROFESSED MEMBERS

OF THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN NEW ENGLAND,

WHO HAVE

ADOPTED OR BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR THE UNSOUND DOCTRINES

PROMULGATED BY THE LATE

JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY.

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING.

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"We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

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## AN EARNEST EXPOSTULATION

*With those professed Members of the Society of Friends in New England, who have adopted or become responsible for the unsound doctrines promulgated by the late Joseph John Gurney.*

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It is well known, by all who are acquainted with the history of our Religious Society, that its distinguishing views and principles were in a very remarkable manner fully and clearly set forth and defended by our first Friends. The great opposition and persecution which they met, and the apostacy of some in prominent standing among them, so far from inducing them to waver, did but increase their zeal and boldness for those precious doctrines and testimonies which we believe they were raised up of the Lord to revive and hold forth to the world as the true characteristics of primitive Christianity. With them, there was no evasion or equivocation, but with all readiness they gave a true account of the hope within them to all honest inquirers, and also to their enemies and persecutors. While their sincerity and godly zeal were thus evinced by a candid and unhesitating confession of their faith without regard to the consequences to themselves, at the same time they condemned, denied and faithfully testified against *all false doctrines*, as did the Prophets, Christ himself, and his Apostles, for the very essential purpose of clearing the truth from error and as a timely warning, in order that the Lord's people might not be beguiled thereby. And especially was this the case with regard to errors proceeding from those professing the Truth, but who had fallen away therefrom. They faithfully, and without delay, cleared themselves



from all such, so that none could justly charge them with the inconsistency of having fellowship with those who departed from the Faith.

It is believed that false doctrines were never more prevalent in the world than at the present time, nor a greater departure from the life and power of true religion: certainly never among those professing to be Friends, so great as has been witnessed during the last twenty-five years. Can it be that there is less necessity now, for guarding against innovation upon the Truth, than when the primitive Friends endured so much for it? No, it matters not at what time, nor from what source the error comes, it should be faithfully and unflinchingly met, and the Truth vindicated before the world.

Those whom we are now addressing may, we think, with great propriety, be divided into two classes: first, those who have actively favored the doctrines of Joseph John Gurney, and have openly defended and excused the author of them, still claiming to be in unity with our early and faithful predecessors in the Truth: and secondly, such as have been in great measure brought into the position they now occupy, through an association and fellowship with those just named—having no testimony to bear against the doctrines alluded to, often making the plea that *they* have nothing to do with them.

Now, Friends, whether identified with the one or the other of these classes, we feel constrained to remind you of the wide contrast between the course you are pursuing, and that of our early Friends, briefly alluded to in the preceding remarks; and as we trust in a measure of Christian love and fidelity to urge upon you the necessity there is that you should return again to the safe enclosure from which you have gone astray.

With an earnest desire for your safety and well-being, we wish to impress upon you that the doctrines spread abroad by Joseph John Gurney, are irreconcilably opposed to those of the early Friends—that where the one comes in, the other must necessarily go out. This is clearly evident from the general tenor of his writings, and is proved beyond contradiction by those striking contrasts which have at different times been made of his published sentiments, with those of our ancient standard writers. It is moreover abundantly confirmed by the concur-

rent testimony of intelligent individuals of other denominations who have given their sentiments upon the subject.

A distinguished writer\* of the Presbyterian denomination, in letters addressed to the Society of Friends, used the following language :—"It cannot fail to strike the most superficial reader what a perfect discordance there is on various points between the writings of Mr. Gurney and those of the early Friends ;" and adds, that "he (Gurney) has already taken several steps out of Quakerism, and those too, even larger strides than any that now remain for him to take." The Episcopalians in England, also, well understood the drift of his writings, and did not hesitate to say that "he was one of them, and ought to come to them." The editor of a religious magazine† in New England, in commenting on this subject, says, "To our minds the difference between the doctrines of J. J. Gurney and those of the primitive Friends, is as distinctly marked as that between Calvinism and Arminianism."

Now, Friends, as in the very nature of things a false faith and a false hope must be removed from the heart of man before the true doctrines can effectually take root therein, so on the other hand, if a man believe in the true Gospel Doctrines, and come to witness the blessed effects of such a faith, the Enemy cannot implant his false faith, until he first mislead or corrupt his mind ; for both cannot at the same time prevail or abide there. Light and darkness cannot dwell together, neither can a false faith and a true, at the same time, flourish in the heart of man. The manner of the Tempter's assault upon Eve, is a clear illustration of the view here taken. He first went to work to destroy her faith in the word of the Lord, namely, "That in the day she partook of the forbidden fruit she should surely die." Succeeding in this, he was then able to induce her to believe, that by eating thereof she should be made wise.

So in the present day, his wiles are equally subtle, and in this attempt to induce the successors of Fox and Barclay to turn back again to the weak and beggarly elements from whence those worthies came forth, at the call of their Divine Master, to a far more perfect view and experience of the spirituality of the Christian dispensation, the same policy is apparent. Joseph

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\* Ralph Wardlaw, of Scotland.

† Christian Examiner.

John Gurney well knew that he must first undermine our faith in their Apostolic doctrine of immediate revelation, before he could hope to succeed in establishing us in the Episcopal doctrine of the sufficiency of the letter. But how altogether unlike the honest, plain manner of the early Friends, did he undertake to accomplish his purpose! How equivocal was his treatment of the ancient doctrines, attempting to cover himself with the garb and profession of Quakerism, whilst he was intent upon subverting and changing the faith of the Society;—sometimes bringing out his views quite prominently, then modifying and qualifying them with enough of those peculiar to Friends, to insure their reception, and thus, as far as possible, promote his great object. At another time we find him *secretly* sending about to influential Friends, whom he might suppose more or less imbued with his views, sentiments in regard to the interpretation of Scripture, on many vital points wholly adverse to those of Friends; the very points, too, in which consists the principal difference between us and other denominations. And when these views of his were made public, he would not disavow them, yet complained of their publication, saying he had intended them for *private* circulation only!

How clearly was the standing of Joseph John Gurney seen and described by Thomas Shillitoe, George and Ann Jones, and John Barclay, and known to all discriminating readers of his works. And if you, Friends, will come to an honest inquiry before God, sincerely divesting yourselves of all personal considerations, we are convinced that you can but see things as they saw them. Yet as members of a body professing to be Friends, you are indisputably accountable for the fellowship acknowledged by that body with the author of the doctrines in question, and until explicitly disavowed must be justly held responsible therefor. Under present circumstances and in the position you occupy, the want of a declaration against these doctrines, on your part, must and will be deemed as equivalent to the adoption of them. If you were really desirous of sustaining the ancient doctrines of Friends, without compromise, you would quickly see when any innovations were made by introducing opposite doctrines, and would not only feel it your duty publicly to expose and condemn them, but would readily

and willingly do so, although it might be at the expense of losing for a time your good reputation among men.

A declaration of sound doctrines, even though it might not be in any degree defective in regard to those points whereon Gurney is unsound, (as that clearly was, which was put forth by you immediately after the separation in New England,) yet if unaccompanied by a condemnation of the unsound, could not atone for acts such as yours, in support of the wrong ; but you could only be recognized as embracing a confused mass of truth and error, giving evidence of the want of that integrity of purpose which alone can form a basis for confidence and trust.

The plea of ignorance as to the nature of the unsound doctrines, and any efforts to keep them from view, or to close your eyes upon them, cannot now avail ; for all have had the most ample opportunity for information in regard to them. The concern of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, to awaken Friends to the dangerous tendency of these unsound views, is well known ; resulting in the publication by that Yearly Meeting of copious strictures thereon, entitled, " An Appeal for the Ancient Doctrines," &c., which publication has been offered to your consideration, and stands approved and corroborated by the testimony of other bodies of Friends.

But if it be so, that you have really embraced and intend to uphold the doctrines of Gurney, we desire to impress upon you the propriety of making an open and honest avowal thereof, and in a candid and plain manner to state what you do believe concerning them ; but if you still decline this, as heretofore, you must continue to stand, in the view of all honest men, as having departed from our original profession, and as being ashamed, or afraid, publicly to acknowledge your religious sentiments. However sorrowful it is for any to go back from the spirit to the letter,—from the power of godliness to the mere form thereof,—yet it would be but a becoming candor in such, openly to confess the change from the ancient to the new doctrines. An opposite course is but hypocrisy—a great abomination in the sight of God. How lamentable the case of those who have imbibed Gurney's doctrines, of the letter, and yet pretend to be led by the gift of the Spirit, and to experience its guidance

and power ;—a pretension which, in the Divine sight, cannot be other than a great aggravation of their departure from the true faith. “Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

But some of your leading members have said, notwithstanding all the accumulated evidence to the contrary, that “the doctrines of J. J. Gurney are nearly, if not entirely, in conformity with the doctrines of Friends,” evidently for the purpose of inducing Friends to receive them.

The Hicksites, who commenced these modern and painful innovations of avowing and spreading unsound doctrines in the Society, some twenty-five years ago, also boldly professed and declared that the doctrines of Elias Hicks were in conformity with those of the early Friends ; and they continue to the present time to make the same assertions respecting them ; and until the separation was effected, they very earnestly plead for charity, peace and harmony, whilst at the same time they were insinuating their heresies into the minds of Friends, and striving to spread them far and wide. But it was very evident that their great cry for love and unity, was only for the purpose of silencing the objections of honest Friends, until their purpose should be gained, in bringing all, if possible, to the faith of Elias Hicks, and to foreclose all contradiction of his views, or the contrasting of them with the true doctrines of the Society.

Now, Friends, in all earnestness we would ask, whether, in the movements of Joseph J. Gurney, and his supporters, precisely such an object has not been plainly to be seen, and sought to be attained through the same means,—extraordinary efforts to silence all objection, and to keep things quiet until his doctrines should become established ? And have ye not heard the same earnest exhortations to peace, charity, unity with the body, &c., which were made use of by Hicks and his friends ?

Was it not evidently the design of the Enemy of all good, that these unsound doctrines should be brought into the Society, the errors of which stand in two opposite extremes, each very wide from the true standard, for the purpose of subverting Quakerism altogether ;—if possible to lead away, on one side, those who had escaped captivity on the other ? Do you not see that

although these errors of Hicks and Gurney are departures from our faith in different directions, yet that both are apostate, and that if all should follow after these leaders, the ground of primitive Quakerism would be vacated ?

As with the Hicksites, so with those who are identified with this latter heresy ; both refuse to compare the doctrines of their leaders with those of our ancient standard writers, or to acknowledge any distinction between them.

This refusal, and your rejection of the candid investigation and review by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, of your unprecedented proceedings, with respect to those who felt constrained to testify against the unsound doctrines, as well as your entire disregard of the judgment and friendly admonition of the same body, afford the clearest evidence that you do hold to wrong principles, or have at least, no controversy with, or testimony against them, when coming in as a flood upon the Society ; and that the proceedings alluded to will not bear the light ;— proceedings which were both rash and unjust, tending to scatter instead of gathering, to wound instead of healing, and to sustain and defend unsound doctrines (those of other professors) instead of our own ; and which Truth requires should be retracted in all good faith and brotherly feeling, before you can rightfully come into the faith and unity of the true body of Friends. It is well known that when sincere and correct men, who have acted conscientiously, are accused or suspected of having done wrong, they are ever willing, and even anxious, to have their conduct investigated, knowing that the more right proceedings are examined, the more consistent they will appear ; yet we find you relying, for a justification, upon your own *authority*, assuming that whatever may be the character of your proceedings, none have a right to call them in question. Strange ground for any in this day, and especially for those who wish to be considered Friends ; but going to show that the leading ones among you must be conscious of having adopted a course at variance from Friends' principles ; for which, as it cannot be justified upon the ground of right, they are driven to assume that of *authority*.

How greatly is it to be lamented, that the present state of things exists within our once peaceful and happy borders ! In









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